

Everywhere at Once.



P H O E N I X

VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL ISSUE

February 2014
Vol 2 Issue 2

PHOENIX

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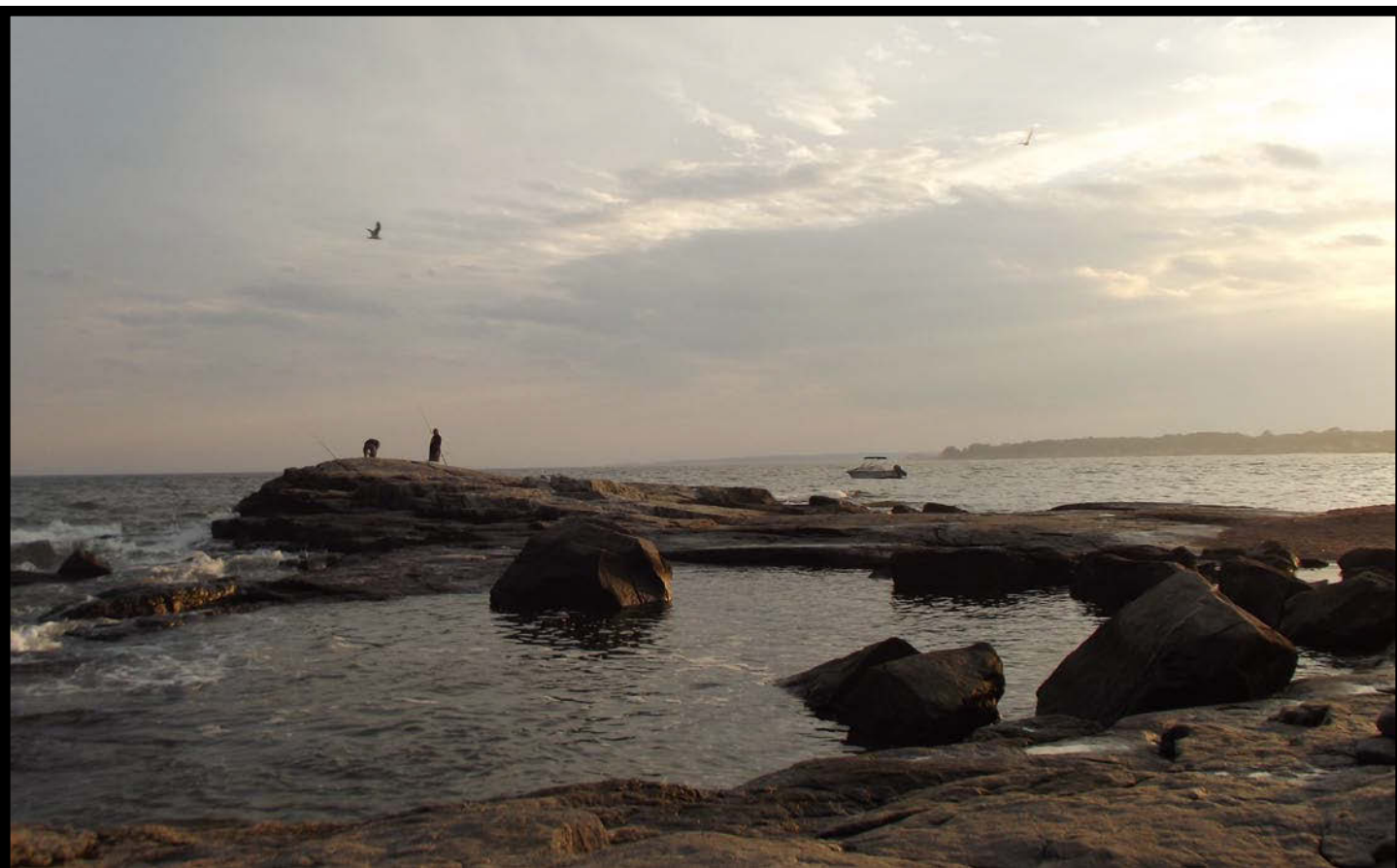
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Hopefully in Love

by Tazmin Uddin

I fell in love
With a man I never met,
A man who would cut his garment
Because upon the sleeve a kitten slept.
A man who could make every person
Feel as if (s)he was the only one who mattered
His very presence left misconceptions shattered.
Orphaned as a child
He grew up to be well-mannered and mild.
He grew up to lead a nation,
Brought a message of love and compassion
This man would give and give
Go without, so others could live
He was sent as a mercy to humankind
A better man than he, none will ever find.
This man is my guiding light
To see his face would be a most glorious sight
A face compared to the beauty of the moon
I pray for our meeting to be soon.
The final messenger and my Prophet
For his prayers, I am in his debt
For though we never met,
Tears filled his eyes as his feet swelled in the late hours
Through the night for us he stood in prayer.
Muhammad, blessed is his name
Said with respect, no need for fame
We pray to walk in the Beloved's footsteps
A legacy found in a nation beyond his death
We pray our actions speak true of our love
From your hands, may we drink from the river above.
A companion, prophet, and friend,
The day I meet you,
My story can finally end.

(Peace and Blessings be upon him).



Complicated Relationship

by Samantha Goodman

WHAT DOES “IT’S COMPLICATED” EVEN MEAN? I know it ain’t a friendship or even a romantic thing, but that’s what it isn’t. What exactly is it?

I’m wonderin’ this as Lu holds my hand. I shouldn’t be thinkin’ about complicated relationships right now. I should be thinkin’—nah, not even thinkin’, I should be yankin’ my hand out of his. But since he’s my friend and all, I’m stallin’. He’s pullin’ me somewhere in this city that I have no idea where anything is, but I know he does.

People are lookin’ at us and I think, *shit they see us hold hands and thinkin’ we’re both fags*. That’s not me and I don’t want people thinkin’ I am.

With that in mind, I halt. Lu is surprised but I don’t care at the moment. I yank my hand from his, shove him, and ask, “The fuck, man?”

Lu still looks surprised and then he makes a face that makes me think, ah, you just realized what you did? He does his shy-boy thing and puts his hand behind his head, grabbin’ a chunk of red curls (that I still think are too red to be human. There has to be some elf in him). Lu mumbles, “Oh, sorry, sorry...I was just trying to...”

He looks real flustered and it’s funny so I take this opp to tease him: “Yeah, yeah. I know, Lu. Just come up with another excuse explainin’ why ya wanna hold my hand. Go ‘head.”

“Be quiet,” he says, tryin’ to be serious but he’s bad at hidin’ it. His mouth twitches from holdin’ back a smile.

Lu is pointin’ somewhere. I look and see he’s pointin’ towards a statue in what looks like the city square.

“I was pulling you over there. See that statue?” Lu says.

The statue looks like it’s made from marble, but I dunno for sure. I mean, it’s white like I

know marble is so I assume it's marble. But anyway, it's of two beings, one elf and one human. Both in some fancy garb and holdin' hands. I get the significance, but I could have lived without seein' it.

"Sooo..." I drawl while looking back to him. "You get touchy-feely with me...for that."

"Touchy-feely?" Lu repeats this slowly like he's never heard the phrase before. He shakes his head and replies, "Errol, shut up. I just wanted you to see it. It's of Neville and Dmitri. The leaders of the first human-elf alliance? Do you realize what we're looking at?"

I shrug just to mess with him and it works. He rolls his eyes and says, "It's suppose to im—"

I cut him off. "Just admit you wanted to hold my hand."

Lu is blushin'. Hard. And all of the sudden, I feel uncomfortable and look away from him. Well, shit. This is what I get for not drop-pin' it.

I know how he feels about me. He told me a few months ago. After gettin' over his sudden confession and holy-shit-he's-gay, I told him, "Well, it sucks to be you right now cuz I ain't no pansy." He just smiled and said, "I thought you might say that." And somehow after that, we managed to stay friends. It was easy until we had moments like this one when I'm reminded, "Oh yeah, he's in love with me."

It's quiet and I guess he's thinkin' the same thing or tryin' to think of something else. "C'mon, Lu. Why is it so complicated with ya? We're friends so let's act like it."

I take a deep breath and shove him again. Lightly this time. I say, "We gonna stand here all day or can we go get somethin' to eat?"

Lu brightens up a little and says with a smirk, "Didn't we just eat something? You're always hungry."

"And you're always wastin' time. Let's go already."

I walk away and I know he's goin' to follow

me. When he's beside me, we talk about where we should eat and what to do afterward. I say I don't care and he says I never do and he comes up with a few ideas of places to check out.

Good. Things are back to normal. Simple. We're just friends. One elf and one human. One straight and one gay. But it's okay cuz we're cool about it. Not uncomfortable about a thing. No complications at all.

Hearts on Valentine's Day

by Siobhan Bonilla

Hearts on Valentine's Day
He touched my skin
And my head began to spin
Giving the kisses
So he never misses
The spots where they hurt
And I remember when we used to flirt
Into the day of ending love
That's when I looked above
Thought he was the one
I tripped over my belt loop
The one where if ya miss one
He's cheating
And feeding me
Every single lie.
All I wanted was a kiss on the lips
So my heart could do flips
Yet he knew how to enter and leave me
But didn't know how to see
The broken and bruised up
Heart.
But it's supposed to be Valentine's Day
He is no saint
But the way he makes love to me
The candles and the light
I thought everything was right
Until I looked in the mirror
I thought I'd feel so superior
When it came to ignoring
The false promises
When there were no compromises
To be a man
And give me a box of chocolates
Don't even have a box
So I don't know what I'll get

Gump even knew this
And yet I still
Choose to ignore the signs in my face
I feel like I'm about to catch a case
All I wanted was a bouquet of flowers
He was able to ride it slow and fast
But not enough to make it last.
He is no Keith Sweat
But I fret
Over him and this
Because I
Once loved him.
But on Valentine's Day
Valentine's Day
On Valentine's Day
There are no breaks in between
None that could be seen
I allowed him to lay on me
Kiss on me
And feel me
And so I play stupid.
On Valentine's Day
But today he gets a card.
Today this is hard.
I say goodbye
And I do not cry
The well runs
And my heart has spun
But today.
I say
Happy Valentine's Day
And goodbye as I pray.

Emptiness

by Nacre Coleman

Tears contained in a void—
that vacated cavity where
the heart used to reside

The soul searches for a plug
to restrain the feelings of
depression and self-hatred

The plug - incompetent
it's temporary until it's sucked in
by the emptiness of the heart
and deformation of the body

The soul continues its search
as the body aches for attention and relief

She just wants to be filled
With Love
 By Love
 For Love

She's empty because of Love

The Void consumed it
The Heart—absent
The Soul—lost
The Body—Deformed

She is empty

Dear Dad...

by Amelia Ellis

The same day my younger brother, Kyle, was accepted into Southern Connecticut University, my father finally bought himself health insurance. Though I was happy for Kyle, my father's decision to take care of himself might as well have been accompanied by the "Hallelujah" chorus and a shower of manna. Since my parents separated in 2001, concerns over my father's health had been growing with every on-the-job injury and bout of illness. About two years ago he contracted viral vertigo, which left him bed-ridden for a week. He was barely able to afford the medication to ease the dizziness, and as it turns out, he went to work despite the dizziness (mind you he is an independent contractor — he works alone). I certainly was unhappy to find this out. But in his defense, he is alone. People who are alone have to make it work for themselves as best as possible.

So in Ellis fashion, he "sucked it up" and "quit his complaining." Looking at him you wouldn't have thought he was sick. It's either pride or the fact that his mother was a psychiatric nurse that has created this "work until you cannot move" mentality. The joke between him and my grandmother is, "Drink a glass of orange juice and you'll be fine" (something she would say to her five children when they weren't feeling well).

When my father would drive me to the New Haven-Union Station train station after a few day's visit with him, I would bug him about getting health insurance. First I tried the slight nudge, the hint. "How about that health insurance, huh, Dad?" Then I would go the more direct route. "You need health insurance, Dad. One of these days you're gonna contract something and it's going to be the end of you." He would reply, "With my luck, it won't be the sickness. A Little Debbie's truck'll hit me when I'm walking across the street. That's how I'll go." After that came the "think of your children" approach, and I'm pretty sure he stopped listening when I started to sound like my mother, i.e., nagging. I will admit, my persistence was mostly selfish. He had already survived a massive brain aneurysm and multiple back injuries. The Ellis family line is stained with misfor-

tune: one brother choked to death, another did not receive a liver transplant in time; one sister died of metastatic cancer; his father, after recovering from viral pericardium, suffered a heart attack and died. I didn't (and still don't) want to lose my dad. My mind raced at night, paranoically concocting the 101 ways my father could possibly meet his accidental demise the next day with no one there to help him at work and without the proper means to heal.

Finally I asked him why he wouldn't apply for health insurance.

"It's too expensive," he said.

"It's worth it!"

"I can't afford it."

"Yes you can, Dad."

"No, my money goes to my kids. You're my first priority."

It ended with an argument about money.

Last semester, around October, my father called me complaining of heartburn. He said that he was eating less and less because of it. By November it had turned into muscle cramping around the stomach. Come December, he was calling his clients saying he couldn't go into work. He started to lose weight, skip meals. My 6'1", active father weighed a mere 162 lbs. My mother, when she found out all this was happening, would call him up, assess his health, call me, tell me to call him, and I would call him and toss around the words "ulcer" and "gallbladder." He didn't care what it was, he just wanted to get better. Our conversation would end, my mother would call me and ask, "Do you think your father is hiding something?" "No," I would respond. Once I finished speaking with my mother, I would go online and look up gallbladder problems and ulcer symptoms and reassure myself that it was probably just a bad ulcer. My mother's bet was that he had a "rotten gallbladder." Ew, gross.

It turned out to be a rotten gallbladder. Late December he bought the insurance because he couldn't stand the pain anymore (and it was affordable). Once January hit, he was able to get an ultrasound of his gallbladder. He was suffering from a pre-gangrenous gallbladder, the walls were thickening; he was put on the "rush list" of surgery. A gangrenous anything is bad, but in the case of a gallblad-

der, if it ruptures, and the gangrene spreads to the surrounding organs. His gallbladder was removed two weeks later.

I spent the week helping my grandmother around the house and taking care of my dad. His first meal post-surgery was a Velveeta grilled-cheese sandwich with salami and chicken (a combination both my grandmother and I cringed at—but hey, he asked for it), and a bowl of tomato soup. I set up a spot for him on the couch (just some pillows with fresh pillowcases, a sheet over the cushions, and some blankets). He dozed in-and-out the first few days; I made him all the food he couldn't eat months prior to his surgery; my grandma kept the dogs from jumping up on him. After a few days, the sheets and blankets on the couch were all bunched up, and my father was starting to sound like his old self again, e.g., "Let's go to Wal-Mart," "I love watching Judge Judy," "Hey Meils, will you get your old man a Diet Coke while you're up?" Then, frustrated by a pillow uncomfortably wedged in between him and the couch's arm rest, he said, "It isn't all nice anymore like when you first set it up." Once my father had finished moving the pillow to a better position, he said something I've never heard him say before. "It's this kind of stuff that makes me feel like someone still loves me, ya know?"

I remember the sick days when my mother would bundle me up on the couch. She'd make sure I had a big glass of water at all times, was warm enough; that I was wearing socks. The fresh smell of the blankets and coldness of the pillows made me snuggle even deeper into the couch cushions and fall asleep. It was such a comfort; I felt safe, loved, that everything was all right because my mom was there to make me feel better. And then I think about my father, who all this time suffered in silence with his pain, who went to work while experiencing excruciating shooting pains, hunger pangs, and worry for his own 88-year-old mother. Imagine the loneliness, imagine the bitterness. A solitary man longs to be healed. His daughter is in New York, his son is in Massachusetts. His best friend (my mother), can only call and offer reassurance. His own mother can't move around like she used to. He had to endure all of this, and though it was not a worst-case scenario, waiting to find out the answer with no one there to wait with you—and when you're too afraid you'll make other people nervous by asking—is scary.

Dear Dad,

You'll never be alone. Whatever happens to you, I'll be right there with you. I'm so happy you're alive and well. Now go drink a glass of orange juice and you'll be fine.

Happy Valentine's Day.

*Love,
Your daughter*

Beyond

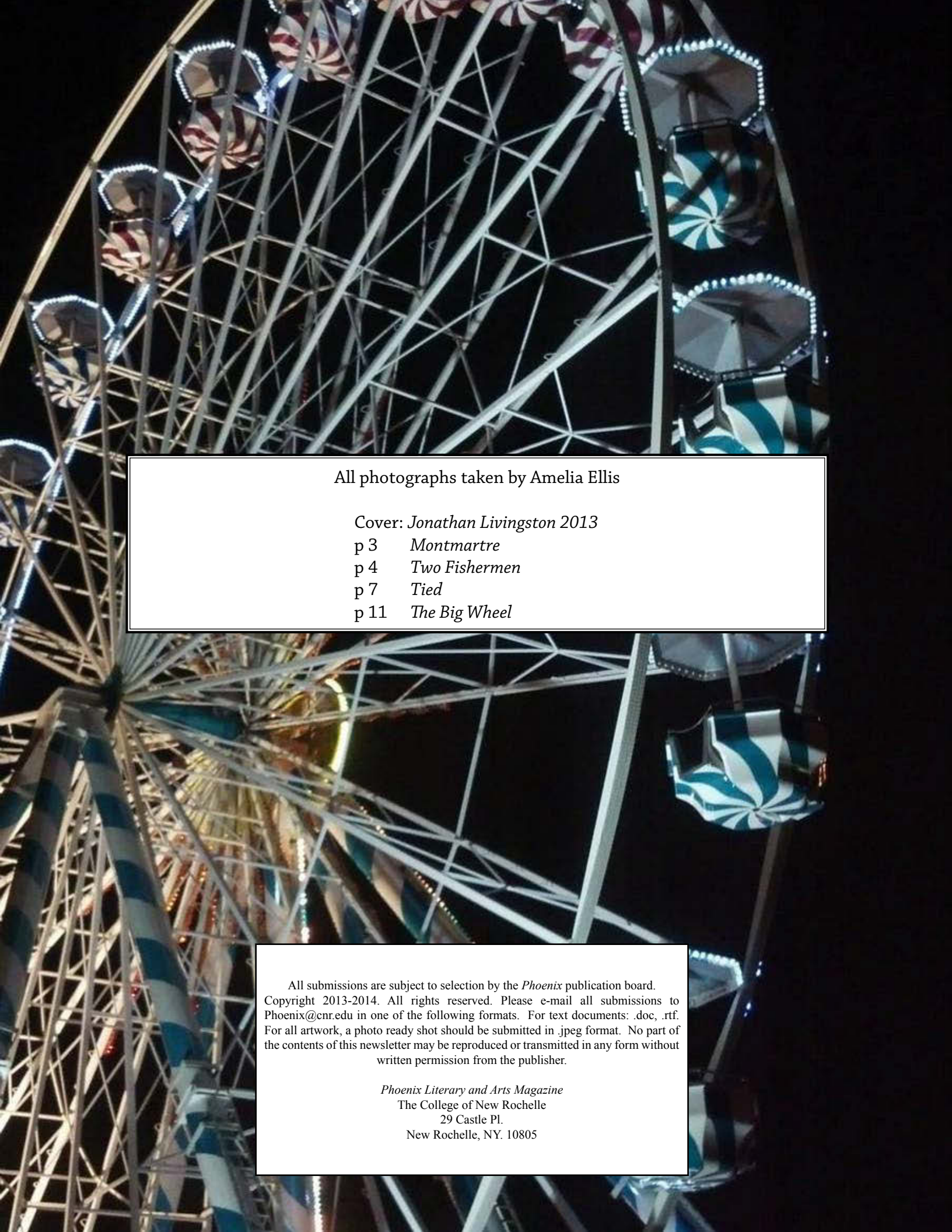
by Robert S. Arko
Emeritus Faculty, GRS

I call your name but you are on a star
And cannot hear me.
My words drift to you through time just below the speed of light
I look at you
And you see only a tiny bit of matter
Far away in cold, dark, deep, distant space
Only a pale blue light exists
Morning comes and you are gone
I am left longing with my memories

Unconditional

by Bianca Jeannot

In a world that's ended
We need each other to march on
Although our hearts and souls may be bruised and scarred
It is our love that keeps us strong
So take my hand on this wretched day
Heart sick and all, let's stand by each other
As we watch the sky bleed from red to gray
We'll share kisses in this makeshift bed
And with blessing from my mother
May we be forever wed



All photographs taken by Amelia Ellis

Cover: *Jonathan Livingston 2013*

p 3 *Montmartre*

p 4 *Two Fishermen*

p 7 *Tied*

p 11 *The Big Wheel*

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Phoenix Literary and Arts Magazine
The College of New Rochelle
29 Castle Pl.
New Rochelle, NY. 10805